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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 UNVIE VIENNA 000655

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [SNAR](#) [IR](#) [KNNP](#)
SUBJECT: IRAN: TEHRAN EDUCATES DELEGATION ON ITS
COUNTERNARCOTICS EFFORTS, REQUESTS AID

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Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Geoffrey Pyatt for reasons 1.4 (c) and (e)

(C) Summary. On December 12, Pakistani Ambassador Shahbaz debriefed DCM and Msnoff on a recent Iranian government-sponsored trip he took to Iran to gain a better understanding of Tehran's efforts to combat drug smuggling into and through Iran. Shahbaz's overall impression was that Iran's efforts to combat the drug trade are serious and significant and reported a familiar message from the Iranian Foreign Minister regarding the country's nuclear program. Iranian government officials made repeated requests for international technical assistance, such as the provision of night vision goggles and radar, to aid the patrolling of its long border with Pakistan and Afghanistan. End Summary.

(C) On December 12, Pakistani Ambassador Shahbaz debriefed DCM and Msnoff on a recent trip he took to Iran to gain a better understanding of Tehran's efforts to combat drug smuggling into and through Iran. The Iranian government sponsored the travel of ten foreign officials, mostly coming from Vienna, to exhibit its counternarcotics efforts and to request international assistance for technical support and equipment. In addition to Ambassador Shahbaz, who represented the G-77, representatives from Cuba (on behalf of the NAM), Namibia (as chair of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs), Venezuela (on behalf of GRULAC), Germany (on behalf of the mini-Dublin group), Switzerland (on behalf of WEOG), the Arab League, and the INCB attended. Iranian Permanent Representative to the IAEA Soltanieh accompanied the delegation.

(C) The ten officials were accompanied throughout by the Iranian general in charge of patrolling Iran's eastern border. They began the tour in Zahedan, near the tri-border area where Iran, Pakistan, and Afghanistan come together and were flown by helicopter along a significant length of Iran's border to show the ditch that Iran has dug to prevent smugglers from crossing into Iran in remote parts of the country and then a wall and fence that extended the border protection. The officials were told that the four meter wide by five meter deep ditch extends approximately 370 kilometers and will be lengthened to cover 600 kilometers. Along a more settled area, Iran had built a 35-kilometer wall topped with barbed wire and then a simpler 140 kilometer-long barbed wire fence. Iran has also created obstacles in rivers that cross its border which allow water to flow, but prevent the passage of smugglers. In other areas, surveillance towers are manned to watch for smugglers, but Iran argued that these methods are much less effective than the barriers and need to be augmented with better equipment, such as night vision goggles and radar. Iranian officials claimed that "people are not the problem" and that they have 50,000 Law Enforcement Forces (LEF) personnel dedicated to border patrol, but that these

forces are ineffective in the dark, thus requiring international assistance in the form of equipment and technical support. In response to a question by Msnoff, Shahbaz noted that there was no discussion of Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps support for the border patrol effort. He noted that everyone he saw was wearing the same uniforms with the same insignia, and the government said that they were all part of Iran's police force. Shahbaz's overall impression was that Iran's efforts to combat the drug trade are serious, significant, and well-coordinated. Iranian officials said that thus far, they have spent 600 million dollars on infrastructure to prevent smuggling.

(C) In response to Iran's repeated pleas for international assistance, Shahbaz noted to the Iranian officials that "first we need to make these efforts ourselves" before we ask the international community for assistance. The officials responded that they planned to continue their domestic efforts but that there were technical limits to what Iran could do domestically. Shahbaz also reminded Iranian officials that if they make the Iranian border impenetrable, the smuggling will move across another border, implying that international assistance to Iran might help solve Iran's problem, but would not solve the broader problem of the amount of drugs being moved out of Afghanistan to markets across the world. The DCM reminded Shahbaz that the U.S. has concerns about the transfer of sophisticated dual-use technology such as night vision goggles given Iranian support for terrorism and anti-coalition activities in Iraq and asked why Iran is not requesting other equipment that is less controversial but might still address their problems. Shahbaz noted that Iranian officials were not very specific about the types of assistance that they need, but expects that Iran will make the same general pleas for technical assistance and equipment at next week's Paris Pact meeting.

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(C) In a meeting with Foreign Minister Motaki, the same request for international assistance was made, but Motaki spoke more broadly about Iranian efforts and concerns. He criticized Karzai's efforts to talk to the Taliban given the brutal history of that group and mentioned the nuclear issue only briefly to reiterate that peaceful nuclear energy is Iran's right.

(C) Shahbaz said that he questioned several times during the trip why the volume of drugs coming out of Afghanistan is so significant given the number of coalition forces on the ground in Afghanistan. German Ambassador to Tehran Honsowitz responded that combating the drug trade was not the coalition's mandate and that they could not combat drug production and smuggling in addition to their security mandate. Shahbaz argued that this was not a convincing answer. The DCM noted that the increase in narcotics activity was likely an indicator of the deteriorating security climate in the country and underlined out concern about the nexus between Taliban and drug trafficking activities.

(C) Shahbaz also noted the severe problem of drug addiction in Iran. Although the officials were supposed to visit an Iranian rehabilitation clinic, they "ran out of time." Shahbaz hypothesized that the omission of this site visit was purposeful. He noted that unlike the West's "gentle" rehabilitation efforts, Iran treats its drug addicts like criminals and thus the government may not have wanted to show a clinic which would raise questions about their treatment of these individuals.

(C) Shahbaz also briefly outlined his recommendation to the incoming U.S. administration on the nuclear stalemate with Iran, noting that it is time to try an alternative to the current strategy and to engage with Iran directly without preconditions. Because the U.S. is a big country, it has the luxury of testing the theory that engagement will work. He

reiterated that Tehran does not have an interest in engaging with the EU, but is focused on engagement with Washington. Shahbaz also emphasized Pakistan's interest in finding a solution to the Iranian nuclear issue. With two nuclear states to the east and all of its forces deployed on that side of the country, Pakistan has no interest in facing a nuclear adversary to the west as well.

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